

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 077881

EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON, US DEL LOS

OLLOWING REPEAT COLOMBO 1359 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
USUN NEW YORK MARCH 24.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1359

EXDIS

FOR RICHARDSON, STATE DEPT AND LEONARD USUN-ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLOS
SUBJECT: LOS-PRESIDENT AMERASINGHE

REF: STATE 049153

1.DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS WE HAVE MAINTAINED
CLOSE CONTACT WITH OTHER EMBASSIES ON AMERASINGHE'S
POSITION, PARTICULARLY CANADA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM.
THE NEW ZEALAND HIGH COMMISSIONER CAME ESPECIALLY
TO SEE THE FOREIGN MINISTER. AND WE HAVE BEEN IN
TOUCH WITH SYMPATHETIC OFFICIALS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.
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2. IN VIEW OF THESE CONSULTATIONS AND REPORTS FROM USUN AND
WASHINGTON, I CONCLUDED IT WAS TIME TO SEE PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE
PERSONALLY AND DELIVER PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE
AS REQUESTED IN REFTEL. A COPY OF THE POINTS MADE
IN WRITING IS BEING POUCHED TO AMBASSADORS RICHARDSON AND LEONARD.

3. IN QUIET BUT SERIOUS DISCUSSION EARLY MORNING MARCH 24, A HOLIDAY HERE, AT JAYEWARDENE'S OFFICE, I ELABORATED ON THE MEMORANDUM, WHICH HE READ WITH INTEREST. THE MAIN POINTS I MADE WERE:

U.S. WAS GRATEFUL FOR GSL'S READINESS TO HAVE AMERASINGHE CONTINUE ON UN PAYROLL IF UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED; REMARKABLE THAT SOMEONE SHOULD HAVE SUCH WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE FROM ALL BUT A HANDFUL OF LATIN AMERICANS. I WAS NOW RETURNING, ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRESIDENT CARTER, ON GROUNDS OF THREE NEW DEVELOPMENTS SINCE JAYEWARDENE'S FIRST DECISION. THE AUSTRIAN PRECEDENT OF LOOSE LINKAGE TO THE DELEGATION ON UN PAYROLL HAD BEEN SUGGESTED AS A WAY OUT, THE OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES THAT ARE ALREADY EMERGING IN SUCCESSION AND WHICH APPEAR TO RISK THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE CONFERENCE, AND THE FACT THAT FERNANDO WAS NOW FIRMLY IN PLACE AS HEAD OF SRI LANKA'S DELEGATION SO THAT AMERASINGHE COULD NO LONGER THREATEN IN ANY WAY HIS PREEMINENCE OVER THE DELEGATION. I STRESSED THE LIKELIHOOD THAT PROCEDURAL DIFFICULTIES AND DIFFERENCES OVER THE SUCCESSION COULD RISK THE PRESENT PRECARIOUS AGREEMENT.

4. HE READ MY MESSAGE WITH CARE AND LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AND SYMPATHETICALLY, INTERJECTING A POINT FROM TIME TO TIME. IN REPLY HE QUIETLY DISCUSSED THE

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DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS HE WAS FACING HERE, SINCE NEARLY EVERY MEMBER OF HIS GOVERNMENT WAS BITTERLY OPPOSED TO AMERASINGHE, ON BOTH PERSONAL AND PARTY GROUNDS. (IN VIEW OF THE OBVIOUS SENSITIVITY OF THE FOLLOWING POINT, YOU MUST PROTECT THIS CONFIDENCE.) HE ALSO RELUCTANTLY BROUGHT INTO THE ARGUMENT SOME OF AMERASINGHE'S PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS WHICH WERE NO SURPRISE TO ME. THERE ARE NOW ENOUGH ACCUSATIONS AGAINST HIM HERE AND IN NEW YORK SO THAT THE PRESIDENT IS NOT PREPARED TO HAVE HIM ASSOCIATED WITH HIS ADMINISTRATION IN ANY WAY, EVEN UNDER THE AUSTRIAN FORMULA.

5. JAYEWARDENE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO ACCOMMODATE PRESIDENT CARTER. HE HAS THE HIGHEST RESPECT FOR HIM, FOR HIS EFFORTS TO SET AMERICAN POLITICS BACK ON ITS FORMER HIGH GROUND, AND FOR HIS STANDS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE DIGNITY OF MAN, AND FOR THE USG'S OBVIOUS ASSISTANCE TO THE GSL'S DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. HE HOPED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRESIDENT COULD APPRECIATE HIS OWN CONCERN FOR THE PRINCIPLES OF EXEMPLARY CONDUCT IN OFFICIALS AND THEREFORE

UNDERSTAND WHY IN THIS CASE, HOWEVER PLAUSIBLE THE EXPEDIENT ARGUMENT MIGHT SEEM, HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO HAVE AMERASINGHE ASSOCIATED WITH HIS DELEGATION IN ANY WAY AT ALL. ACCORDINGLY, AND VERY REGRETFULLY, HE WAS NOT ABLE TO DO WHAT HE WAS BEING ASKED, NOT ONLY BY THE UNITED STATES BUT BY OTHER GOVERNMENTS AS WELL. HE WAS VERY SORRY, AND HOPED I WOULD CONVEY TO THE PRESIDENT HAS DEEP REGRET.

6. MY EFFORTS TO PRESS OUR VIEW IN TERMS OF THE INTERNATIONAL DESIRABILITY OF THE NEW LEG ORDER, THE RISK OF THE CONFERENCE'S COLLAPSE, ETC., WEJ SADLY BUT FIRMLY TURNED ASIDE.

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7. BEFORE MY CONVERSATION I HAD THOUGHT JAYEWARDENE'S POSITION RESULTED FROM PERSONAL PICQUE. I NOW BELIEVE LARGER ISSUES OF BEHAVIORAL PRINCIPLE ARE THOUGHT TO BE AT STAKE AND TO AVOID POSSIBLE PERSONAL EMBARRASSMENT TO AMERASINGHE WE HAD BETTER WORK ON THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, NO LONGER HERE.

8. RELUCTANTLY I CONCLUDE WE HAVE HERE AN EXAMPLE OF HUMAN PERSONAL FRAILTY CATCHING UP WITH A DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL FIGURE. I BELIEVE OUR BEST COURSE NOW IS TO DEAL WITH THE LATIN AMERICANS AND HOPE UN UNANIMITY TRACK WILL WORK. I DOUBT IF A REQUEST FROM WALDEHEIM ALONG LINES SUGGESTED BY HAMEED WILL WASH.

9. I CANNOT TELL YOU HOW SORRY I AM THAT WE COULD NOT MAKE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S EXPEDIENT INTERESTS PREVAIL OVER THE PERSONAL AND PRINCIPLED REASONS THAT BLOCK MOVEMENT HERE. IN ORDER TO HELP AVOID RENEWAL OF "YANKEE DICK" ACCUSATIONS AGAINST JAYEWARDENE, I VOLUNTEERED THAT WE WOULD CLOSELY HOLD THE FACT THAT I HAD DISCUSSED THE AMERASINGHE MATTER ONCE AGAIN WITH HIM PERSONALLY. I WILL NOT REPORT THIS CONVERSATION TO MY COLLEAGUES HERE AND TRUST YOU WILL NOT DO SO THERE.

WRIGGINS
UNQUOTE VANCE

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